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REPORT 23

OF THE

SEVENTEENTH

Annual Conference

OF THE

SOCIAL-DEMOCRATIC FEDERATION,

HELD AT

THE CO-OPERATIVE HALL,  
EXETER STREET, NORTHAMPTON,

*On August 1st and 2nd, 1897.*

ALSO THE

PROGRAMME and RULES of the S.D.F.

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PRICE ONE PENNY.

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PRINTED AND PUBLISHED BY  
THE TWENTIETH CENTURY PRESS, LIMITED,  
37A, CLERKENWELL GREEN, E.C.



REPORT OF THE  
Seventeenth Annual Conference of the S.D.F.  
August 1st and 2nd, 1897.

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Seventeenth Annual Conference of the Social-Democratic  
tion was held at the Co-operative Hall, Exeter Street,  
Northampton, on Sunday and Monday, August 1st and 2nd.

HAPER, on behalf of the Northampton Branch, gave a cordial  
welcome to the delegates present.

Following opening address was then given by F. G. JONES,  
visional chairman appointed by the Executive Council:—

JONES, —I feel it both an honour and a deep pleasure to  
address the Seventeenth Annual Conference of the Social-Demo-  
cratic Federation. This being the first time I have occupied such  
a position, my thoughts naturally turn to the time when the very  
first conference of the body was held. I wonder if the world will  
know of the almost unrealisable amount of work that has been  
done by the members of our organisation during the sixteen  
years, from the 8th June, 1881, and now. It is certainly beyond  
power to adequately convey to the world a just appreciation of  
the prodigious exertions that have been made by the S.D.F. to  
the people of these islands—of the marvellous steadfastness,  
courage and patience characterising our faithful during the  
bitter and labouring years that have elapsed since the body  
was formed. It will fall to the lot of some kind and competent  
man of later and more truthful years to record the tremendous  
labours that have been made, the lives that have been devoted,  
the hearts and homes that bear unmistakable trace of the  
endeavours of many of our best and bravest pioneers. It  
is that we should remember these things, for in the enthusiasm  
and plans for work to be accomplished in the future, we may  
forget what has been done in the past.

I will forgive me if, for one moment, I claim a word for our  
recognition of the work done by our comrades in this town  
of Northampton. I know the men here so well, and the local, as  
well as the general, difficulties I am so fully acquainted with, as to  
be competent, and I think just, in conveying to our North-  
ampton comrades, with your permission, a glad and hearty  
acknowledgment of their faithfulness to the movement, their loyalty to  
it, and of their unwearying labours for the cause. We gained  
well-merited satisfaction for this in the splendid poll we made  
at the last General Election. Our meeting in their town—when  
we will see for the first, and perchance the last, time some of  
our comrades from other parts—will, I hope, and have no doubt,

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give them increased courage to go on with the glorious work. Northampton is at last an impregnable fortress of Socialism, and one of those great centres of Socialist strength which all look eagerly forward to seeing. It will be well if I can bring our enemies here in this town, as elsewhere, the, what may be to them, very pleasant knowledge, that our party is absolutely incapable of defeat. To paraphrase: "The Socialist ye will have with you." Our opponents can take it from me that they cannot from our point of view, can only have one ending, and that is their defeat. They cannot beat us off; we have dared to fight before; we shall fight again, and with more determination, discipline, and improved hopes of success, Northampton and will, be won for Social-Democracy.

We have met here, comrades, to confer how best we improve our weapons and strengthen our forces to crush our enemies. We have business to do, to the importance of which the capitalist class in this country will be one day very much indebted. Our Conference will help us to understand each other more, will doubtless clear away some of the undergrowth which impedes our progress, while these meetings constitute our reply to the statement that "Socialism is dead." Vital to the claims your attention, to be dealt with in a serious manner by serious men in a very serious movement. Does the war captious critics ever ponder for one earnest moment that not here, or in our movement, personally benefits one jot or tittle his part in the Social-Democratic movement? Will our enemies believe that we enlist our services with no hope of personal reward? Can they believe so, or has their pet civilisation reduced to such a lowly brute state that they find it impossible to believe that men and women are working for the triumph of a cause which brings them no reward here or hereafter? Has "the highest order man has seen" so mutilated the good that nature might originally endowed them with that the highest ethic man has has no meaning for them? "The people—the people be damned, I am the people," undoubtedly expresses the Alpha and Omega of life for the exploiter.

Our Secretary will, in his customary Annual Report, give us an idea of what we have done during the past twelve months. It is not for me to dogmatise, but there are several matters of a serious moment which you will have to deal with in your deliberations. Not the least of these is the relation of the Two Centuries Press and *Justice* to the S.D.F. The two are not two things, but one thing, and practically the condition of the movement is illustrated by the position of *Justice*. It does not require much to perceive what an awkward position we, as a party, are in. Our movement would be placed in, if we had no paper like *Justice* which we should be well-nigh lost. We should be without the best communication link we have. And yet is the position of our gallant little

it should and easily could be? Does it reflect the credit it should on us whom it has so nobly and faithfully represented and defended for such a number of trying and toilsome years? Would not all of you, would that every man and woman in the S.D.F., and in other parties, too, could learn of the sacrifices that have been made, the hardships that have been endured, and the hearts that have well-nigh been broken in order that our little paper should be kept afloat. The T.C.P. was formed to ensure the existence of *Justice*, and yet there are men in the movement, hundreds of them, whose help, which would not be felt as a loss to themselves, they would gladly wanted to secure the Press and so place the financial position of *Justice* beyond all doubt, with the probability of its speedy enlargement. To me, personally, *Justice* is like a dearest friend whose constant cheer and help and good faith—indeed, whose existence has been a primary factor in making life tolerable under the present conditions. For myself, if *Justice* were stopped, I should be inconsolable, and these feelings I know are common to many others. It is my earnest hope that from this Conference will come some proposal and determination that the T.C.P. shall be furnished with the necessary resources to make *Justice* permanently secure. While I appeal to all, and I know full well the taxes on a slender income, I urge my appeal particularly to those whose means would easily allow of considerably more help to *Justice* and the movement generally than either at present receive from them. You will consider the important question of victimised members. The interest of this will appeal to all of you, and maybe you will be able to suggest some plan to cope with the disasters often created by unscrupulous and villainous employers.

It is odd that we should have been told by the late Charles Webb that the struggle of the future would not be between the red heads and republics, but between capital and labour. It is an unthinking majority of the workers do not at present realise this fully, a growing minority of the shirkers do. So it is that the employer, taken as personifying his class, considers the Socialist in his employ, and particularly if the Socialist is an active participant in the movement, a most formidable person, to say the least, to be near his property, living or dead. He will order his discharge; he will be content and happy to know his Socialist workman starves, and that his wife and children are being murdered, while he himself will thank God for his business and thank him more for better business, hoping for the forgiveness of his sins as he has forgiven those that trespassed against him! Brotherly treatment of this kind once more demonstrates the goodwill existing between employer and employed, and the non-existence of the class war!

You will hear reports dealing with our financial relations. I shall refer this strictly to those who have that matter in hand. Suffice



it for me to say that we can make our way and pay our debts despite our remarkable faculty for accomplishing very much with very little, *only* when all branches conform strictly and conform to the necessary rules we have ourselves made for the preservation of essential financial relations between the branches and the party.

Now that we are stupifying in a ridiculous exhibition of tomfoolery, may we not ask ourselves, "Have we nothing to be about?" Indeed, we have. We, as a revolutionary political party, have lived longer than any other in England. When this body was formed there was practically no Socialism in this country, where is it not? From our ranks have gone out some of the most important and respected and influential men in the trade union world; we have had, and have, a goodly proportion of the best of the working class; some of the most capable men of the working class have served, and still serve, our body; our members have held some of the most important offices in State departments, and are working on and often possess control of forces and means of production, productive and distributive and transporting agencies, which I might point out can be used for more than one purpose. And the capitalist and landlord rulers of the land have occasioned some amount of uneasiness if they only knew where they went and whatever they ate or drank or wore, a rascally Socialist was more or less responsible for their safety and comfort. With the most slender resources and against overwhelming difficulties, we have, to a large extent, revolutionised social feelings, ideas, and aspirations of working class people, and literature. We have made it necessary for politicians, Liberal and Conservative, to make pitiful inroads on their own power and wisdom in the adoption of a number of our ameliorative proposals, and in the use of our language; and their special literary productions and middle class current literature generally exhibit unacknowledged exploitation of the technique of the scientific and historical foundations of our principles. Science, art, literature, philosophy, and oratory, have had, and still have, some of the best and bravest children in our ranks. Yes, and we have survived some rough periods to survive, and severe storms to weather. They have tried us, but we have not deserted our flag. The traitors and soldiers have left us, betraying their principles, and have left their professions. It is hard to be a Socialist at all times, in all places, perhaps; but men who fight and lead in our cause must be prepared for hardships and temptations and calumny. If we are not strong enough to overcome them, and fall either weakly or in consequence of weakness, then they are not fit for our cause. *We want men and women.*

Let us, then, be proud of our traditions. Whatever fools, babblers, or rogues may slander, we have done and are doing what was said was impossible to do in England. Let us defend our traditions with a proud and glowing enthusiasm. The names

of the S.D.F. are ineffaceable from the records of the last century. Men will come and men will go, but our party and our movement will go on till the end of the struggle.

Let us, then, turn to the work you have met here with no mean recognition of the labours of the heroes who have been in our service, and with a solid determination to make this year's work a record worthy of the part you take in the movement; worthy of our best traditions, our hope, and our faith; worthy of our brave old body and its imperishable traditions, and worthy of the Red International whose victory I hope to believe I shall see.

Let the world, then, hear from us, and our future will not belie our past, that enemies and friends alike may be assured that as we have taken the liberty to live and to fight, so shall we take the liberty to triumph.

The appointment of F. G. Jones as chairman of the Conference was unanimously endorsed on the motion of L. WARING (Kilburn), and H. HACKERAY (Clerkenwell).

W. SCOTT (Northampton) was unanimously elected deputy chairman.

J. BARWICK (Hanley), C. R. VINCENT (Truro), and C. W. HARRIS (Southampton), were appointed a committee to examine the credentials of the delegates.

The following report was given in by the SECRETARY:—  
The report for the last twelve months now about to be presented to the Conference shows steady progress during the year, and an enormous amount of work done in many directions. But we must frankly state that the progress of the S.D.F. as an organisation has not been quite up to our expectations. After the astonishing success of the Great International Congress of last year it was expected that the Socialist movement in Great Britain would advance by leaps and bounds. It is questionable, however, whether the tremendous efforts made by all active workers to achieve so great a result as that of the International Congress have not tended to make them feel that they can lie on their oars for a period of decided political reaction; and good trade, the festive spirit, and the general holiday feeling which they have found in the great mass of the people, have all tended to draw them and women away from the sober consideration of the economic conditions around them which is essential to the growth of the Socialist movement. Within the past four or five weeks, however, there has been renewed activity in the ranks of the party, and if we go on during the next twelve months as we have done since the Jubilee we shall more than make up next year for what we have come up to our own expectations since the last Annual Conference.



It is hardly necessary to say anything concerning the national Socialist Workers and Trade Union Congress. Everything, both for and against, has been spoken or written since. But I think we must all recognise that, as time goes on, trifling unpleasant incidents of the opening days become less in comparison with the mighty work which the Congress has undoubtedly accomplished.

Since the last Annual Conference there have been two ordinary and three special meetings of the Executive Council. The attendances of the London members have been as follows: Aveling (recently elected), 5; W. J. Barwick, 24; C. F. D. C. A. Gibson (resigned), 7; Mary Gray, 22; A. P. Hazell, 15; M. Hyndman, 15 attendances and 6 times absent on S.D.F. business; F. G. Jones (recently elected), 4; J. Kent, 19; Lanchester (resigned), 19; G. Lansbury, 19 attendances and twice absent on S.D.F. business; H. Quelch, 21 attendances and 3 times absent on S.D.F. business; J. H. Watts (seat vacant on account of non-attendance and not replying to requesting explanation), 5; J. E. Williams, 12 attendances and once absent on S.D.F. business.

The following new branches have been formed during the year: Chelsea, De Beauvoir Town, Tottenham (reformed), Bathgate, Brierfield, Dewsbury, Glasgow (College), Leyland, Newcastle-on-Tyne, Plymouth, the Rushcliffe Division, Nottingham, and Southport.

At the beginning of last year—the S.D.F. year that is—was threatened with a little trouble by the police at Southend. It was, however, that their efforts to prevent the S.D.F. holding meetings were only drawing bigger crowds together each Sunday, the authorities finally desisted.

Your Executive have taken part in the meetings held to protest against the alleged tortures inflicted on Anarchists by the Government. Criticism has been made in a few quarters of this action in co-operation with the Anarchists. Your Executive desire it to be thoroughly understood that such action can in no way identify the organisation with Anarchist propaganda. The S.D.F. will always take action against political tyranny and in any shape or form, no matter on whom practised.

The May Day Demonstration held in Hyde Park this year has been far and away the most successful demonstration that has been held. The procession was longer, the demonstration was more powerful, and the trade unions turned up in greater force than on previous First of May demonstrations. Next year the First of May must come on a Sunday. That alone will ensure an imposing manifestation, alike in the provinces and in London. But our friends and comrades must take particular care that the May Day Demonstration, because it will take place on a Sunday next year, is still

held on the First of May, and is not allowed to again become a Sunday demonstration.

Financially, the S.D.F. shows a considerable improvement—namely, that is, in the amount of money which has come into the hands of the Central Office. It will be remembered that the Central income last year was £1,031 18s. 4½d., as against £1,000 for 1894-5. This year the Central Fund shows a still further increase, having risen to £1,259 6s. 11¼d. But—and this is an important point—we are spending even more than we receive. This will, of course, come before you in the Treasurer's report. I may mention, parenthetically (which I do not think has been mentioned before) that the S.D.F., through its Central Office, has received, and a few of its members individually, contributed no less than £140 15s. to the expenses of the International Congress. Some of our Executive have taken advantage of the offer made by comrade Hyndman to act as financial secretary of the S.D.F., and have accepted of him to that post.

Indoor meetings have again been held this year in London and in the provinces, for which the Executive Council have taken the full responsibility. In addition to those held in London, large meetings were held in Bradford, Brierfield, Edinburgh, Glasgow, and Rochdale. The majority of the meetings were a success, which had to be met out of the Central Funds. Many meetings were also held on the Famine in India.

The terrible famine which has been devastating India for months past made it imperative that the S.D.F. should do its utmost to bring home the truths about the misgovernment of that great peninsula to the people of these islands. Last January the Lord Mayor of London announced the holding of a meeting of the Corporation of London at the Mansion House to discuss the Famine in India. Our comrade Hyndman sent the Lord Mayor notice of our intention to move an amendment calling attention to the present perversion of the Indian Famine Relief Fund, raised by a special taxation to cover the expenses of frontier expeditions; to the heavy drain of produce from India to England of not less than £1,000,000 value in gold without any commercial return whatever; and demanding that the Secretary of State for India should suspend for the current year the monthly drawings on the Indian Exchequer, and should authorise the Government of India to devote the many millions sterling thus rendered available to saving the lives of the millions who would otherwise be sacrificed. The Lord Mayor refused to allow this amendment to be submitted to the meeting. Comrade Hyndman attended the meeting at the Mansion House on January 16th, and protested against the Lord Mayor's action in violating all ordinary and recognised rules of public meeting. He attempted to put the amendment to the meeting, but was ruled out by the Lord Mayor. Having further persisted in his right to speak to the amendment, he was eventually removed from the



meeting by the police. An amendment in similar terms, proposed by J. Hunter Watts, was likewise ruled out of order.

Out of that meeting, and the publicity which H. M. Hyndman's amendment thus obtained all over the country, came forth the great meetings which the S.D.F. afterwards held on behalf of the people of India. The S.D.F. at once issued its manifesto on "The English-made Catastrophe in India," which was distributed to the number of 200,000. On Monday, February 10, we held the great meeting in St. James's Hall, at which Professor Beesly took the chair. All who had to do with the organisation of that meeting felt that a serious responsibility was upon them. A great meeting in St. James's Hall was more than even the Armenian Atrocities' Committee, with money behind them and the Duke of Westminster for their chairman, could successfully manage. It was a meeting such as the S.D.F. had never before attempted to hold. But the meeting was such a success as even the most sanguine of us had not anticipated. Every part of the great hall, the area, the platform, the orchestra, and all its galleries, was literally packed with dense masses of people. The enthusiasm of the meeting was almost painful to witness. The following resolutions were carried with the utmost acclamation:—

"That this meeting of the citizens of London calls upon the Government to stop now and henceforth the drain of produce from India, officially certified at a value of more than £20,000,000 sterling a year, used to pay home charges, pensions, interest, etc., this drain having caused and now hideously intensifying the famine which is devastating British India. That the foregoing resolution be presented to Lord Salisbury and Lord George Hamilton by a deputation to be arranged by the conveners of the meeting."

The resolution was duly sent to Lord Salisbury and Lord George Hamilton. Both declined to receive any deputation. Lord George Hamilton, however, in his reply, went into the subject of the resolution at considerable length, to which your Executive sent a rejoinder which was published in leaflet form and distributed like the manifesto on the "English-made Catastrophe in India."

Meetings on the Indian Famine were held in many parts of London, and in Aberdeen, Derby (I.L.P.), Edinburgh, Glasgow, Leeds, Liverpool, and Manchester (the large Free Trade Hall meeting being equally as successful as the one in St. James's Hall). Applications for the holding of meetings came pouring in from almost every important town in Great Britain; but we had, unfortunately, not only exhausted all the funds which had been subscribed for the purpose of the agitation by our members and friends, but had trenched as far as we possibly could upon the Central Funds of the S.D.F. The agitation was, to some extent, nullified by our financial inability to hold a mass meeting directly after its predecessor.

We are, however, still keeping this important question of the

misgovernment of India to the front as much as possible, and a pamphlet on the subject will shortly be issued.

Recognising the great need for the appointment of further Organising Secretaries, in accordance with the decision of the last Annual Conference your Executive Council decided to appoint, subject to the approval of the branches of the S.D.F., comrade L. E. Quelch as an additional organising secretary to the body until the end of next September. L. E. Quelch has, up to the present, completed two lecturing and organising tours—one through the Midlands, Lancashire, Newcastle-on-Tyne, and Scotland; the other through the Potteries and certain parts of Lancashire. He has also visited a few of the London branches. The expense has not been very heavy, most of it being defrayed by the branches which he visited; but it is more than the Central Funds can well afford. Yet such work is both necessary and beneficial to the body, and, had they more funds at their disposal, your Executive would be only too ready to consider the appointment of other comrades to similar work.

Your Executive Council have found it necessary, owing to the increase in the amount of business which is brought before them at each meeting, to appoint a small committee to deal with matters of organisation. This committee has been found exceedingly useful in lessening the amount of detail matter which had either to occupy the attention of the Executive to the exclusion of larger business, or to be left undone. Such business as the arranging of lecture tours has been done more expeditiously by the Organisation Committee than could have been done by the larger Executive Council.

Your Executive are sorry to state that they have had to give comrade Chatterton leave of absence three times during the past half year on account of ill health. They hope, however, that his rest for the past month has done his health good, and that he will be able to carry out with his accustomed vigour the lecturing and organising tour in Wales, the Midlands, and the Potteries, which he has just commenced. In addition to the work done by comrades J. Chatterton and L. E. Quelch, comrades J. E. Williams, James Leatham, and W. G. Pearson have been on short lecturing tours since the last Annual Conference.

Joint action was taken by the branches of the S.D.F. and I.L.P. in Blackburn in regard to a probable vacancy by the threatened retirement of Mr. Hornby. Permission was granted to the three branches of the S.D.F. by your Executive and Parliamentary Committee to support the candidature of Joseph Burgess for the constituency. Some correspondence afterwards arose regarding a course of action taken by Joseph Burgess which met with the disapproval of the local Joint Election Council. This course of action was the writing to Liberal Labour M.P.s, desiring them to state whether they would be willing to speak on behalf of his candidature if they were asked to do so. This was done without



any consultation with the Election Committee. The Election Committee very naturally objected to this proceeding on the part of comrade Burgess, and passed a resolution to the effect that no one be invited to speak in support of the Socialist candidate outside of recognised speakers of the I.L.P. and S.D.F., without the sanction of the Committee. To this resolution Joseph Burgess demurred, and it was mutually agreed that the whole matter should be referred to the Administrative Council of the I.L.P. and the Executive Council of the S.D.F., whose decisions should be regarded as binding. Your Executive Council had no hesitation whatever in strongly supporting the resolution of the Blackburn Election Committee. Joseph Burgess, as you will see from the report of the Parliamentary Committee, has recently resigned his candidature for Blackburn.

A regrettable incident has occurred recently with respect to the late Hulme Branch of the S.D.F. Owing to some unfortunate circumstances of a private and domestic nature concerning James Leatham, the Hulme Branch, of which he was a member, decided to expel him from the branch. The notice of the expulsion was sent to the Socialist papers for publication. From information subsequently received, it appears that the sending of the notice of the expulsion was unauthorised by the Hulme Branch at the time, but was endorsed by them later. The matter was afterwards sent to your Executive Council by the Hulme Branch for their consideration with a long statement of the facts of the case from the point of view of the branch. About the same time James Leatham applied for membership in the Strand Branch, sending his view of the case with his application. Your Executive carefully went into the whole matter, being furnished with a great deal of correspondence from both sides, and came to the conclusion that the Hulme Branch were not justified in expelling James Leatham, and decided to admit him to membership in the Strand Branch. They also strongly protested against the action of the Hulme Branch in publishing a notice of the expulsion from the branch of a member of the Executive Council, elected by the Annual Conference, without any notification to his fellow members on the Executive Council. The result of the matter has been the secession of the Hulme Branch from the body.

The correspondence which took place last year between the S.D.F. and the I.L.P. relative to the promotion of a Congress between Socialist and trade organisations was published in the report presented to the last Annual Conference. Out of that correspondence arose a proposition from the I.L.P. that a conference of Socialist bodies should be held with a view to forming a Joint Committee to arbitrate upon any disputes which might occur in regard to Socialist candidatures. To this our Executive at once assented; but it was not without misgiving that your representatives were appointed when it was formed that the Fabian

Society was to be invited to the Conference. Your representatives soon learned that that Committee was an impossibility as long as the Fabian Society's representatives remained. Between the I.L.P. and the S.D.F. there was every prospect of a working arrangement being arrived at; but with the Fabian Society it was entirely different. The whole constitution and policy of the bodies were so dissimilar. At the first meeting of the Joint Committee it was manifest that, though the Joint Committee might have power to act in regard to differences between S.D.F. and I.L.P. candidatures, they had no such power in regard to Fabian candidates—who, in many instances, might cause the most friction—because the latter were not candidates of the Fabian Society, but members of the Fabian Society standing as candidates for whatever elections they were contesting. Such a situation as would thus have been created would obviously have placed the Fabians in the position of arbitrators between the S.D.F. and the I.L.P., a position which your Executive was by no means disposed to favour.

At the meeting of the Joint Committee held on Monday, July 5, the Fabian representatives submitted the following statement of their position:—

"The Fabian Executive will continue to send representatives to the joint committee on condition that the Executives of the S.D.F. and I.L.P. will agree that the judicial decision of the Court of Appeal shall be binding upon the Executives of the candidates running, but the decision of the Court is in every case to be deemed that of the members of the Court alone, not pledging in any way the societies represented to support the candidate."

The position of the S.D.F. was that they objected to the Fabians occupying the position of arbitrators, as they certainly would be if they were included. They also objected to the Fabian candidates not coming under the jurisdiction of the Court, even when such Fabian candidates were running under other auspices. They could not agree to meet the Fabians owing to avowed differences of policy, and to the fact that the Fabians had on various occasions withdrawn their delegates from committees to which they were at first accredited. But they would willingly meet the I.L.P. in the formation of such a Court of Appeal as had been suggested.

J. Keir Hardie, on behalf of the I.L.P., said the I.L.P. had endorsed the suggestion that had been made, and, while preferring that the Fabians should be included, would, if the S.D.F. objected to the inclusion of the Fabians, gladly meet and work with the S.D.F. alone. He considered that possibly a deadlock might arise at some time in the Court, in which case it might be necessary for an outsider to be called in.

After a brief discussion upon these reports the Fabian delegates withdrew.

The S.D.F. and I.L.P. delegates then agreed to recommend to their respective organisations that a Court of Appeal, composed of



three representatives of the S.D.F., and an equal number representing the I.L.P., shall be formed, and that where the two organisations are seeking to put forward candidates in opposition to each other for election to Parliament or any local elective body, and where no agreement can be come to locally, the dispute shall be referred to this Court of Appeal for decision, such decision to be binding upon both parties, and in the event of a deadlock arising in the Court of Appeal, the matter in dispute shall be referred to an arbitrator mutually agreed upon by the parties represented, whose decision shall be final and binding. It was further resolved to advise that the Court of Appeal should begin operations, if need be, in connection with the forthcoming School Board Elections.

This joint action which is now secured between the I.L.P. and S.D.F. bids fair to bring the two organisations into closer touch with each other than they have ever yet been; and your Executive note, with the greatest possible pleasure, that the proceedings of the I.L.P. at its last Annual Conference have brought this body so much more into line with the S.D.F. as to convince them that the time has come when the necessary friendly criticism, which the S.D.F. has never hesitated to pronounce on the I.L.P., may give place to hearty co-operation for the progress and consolidation of the Social-Democratic movement in Great Britain.

The TREASURER's report for the year showed that the Central income had increased from £1,031 18s. 4½d. in 1895-6, to £1,259 6s. 11½d., that the liabilities had decreased £6, and the assets had increased £42. The dues owing by the branches much more than covered the difference between the liabilities and the assets. Some questions were asked and answered, and the reports were finally adopted.

It was decided to postpone the report of the Parliamentary Committee, which came next on the agenda paper, until after the midday adjournment.

The COMMITTEE appointed the Leeds General Council meeting to enquire into the relations between the S.D.F. and the T.C.P. gave in their report as follows:—

"The Twentieth Century Press, Limited, is a joint-stock company, formed expressly for the purpose of producing *Justice*, and doing other printing work. Its capital is nominally £1,000, in 4,000 5s. shares, of which 3,560 have been taken up by 520 shareholders. Of these, 720 are held by the Executive of the S.D.F., in the names of H. M. Hyndman, H. Quelch, and H. R. Taylor, as trustees, who were appointed on behalf of the S.D.F. at a General Council meeting in 1893. The share certificate is held by H. W. Lee. A few shares are held by branches of the S.D.F., a few by outsiders, and the majority by members of the S.D.F. as individuals.

"The Articles of Association state that £350 (represented by 1,000 fully-paid up shares and £100 in cash or shares), were to be paid to

H. M. Hyndman as total purchase-money for the ownership and goodwill of *Justice*. The Committee wrote Hyndman on this subject, but regret to report that he has not replied to their letter. We are, therefore, unable to give any further information with regard to the shares in question.

"The Committee find that the directors have power to refuse the issue of shares to any applicant at their discretion.

"The Article of Association governing voting is as follows:—

"Every member shall have one vote for every share up to ten; he shall have an additional vote for every five shares beyond the first ten up one hundred; and an additional vote for every ten shares beyond the first one hundred."

"It is obvious that the only collective influence the S.D.F. as a body has over the T.C.P. is through the 720 shares (equal to 90 votes) held by the Executive. Every branch holding a share in the T.C.P., of course, votes as the majority of members of that branch decide, just as any individual shareholder, and is not responsible to the S.D.F. as an organisation. Branches not holding shares can influence the T.C.P. only by submitting an instruction as to the voting of the Executive Trustees at a General Council meeting of the S.D.F. If such resolution be carried, the Executive has to instruct its representatives to vote at any meeting of the T.C.P. in accordance with that ruling.

"The Committee has only to add a recommendation that when a branch takes up shares in the T.C.P. the share-certificate be retained by the secretary of the branch for the time being.—T. HEWITT, W. A. BROOKE, F. E. POWELL."

H. W. LEE stated that if the Committee had asked him he could have informed them that the £350 mentioned in their report was paid in shares to those who had advanced sums for *Justice* previous to the formation of the T.C.P., and those who owned a portion of the type and printing apparatus taken over by the Company, the remainder being handed to the S.D.F.

H. QUELCH said that, in a matter of contract and a matter of business, the S.D.F. had no legal existence. H. M. Hyndman appeared as the vendor in the turning over of *Justice* to the T.C.P.

T. HEWITT called attention to the difficulty which the Committee had experienced in finding out whether branches owned shares in the T.C.P., and advised those branches now taking up shares in the T.C.P. to place the share certificate in the hands of their respective secretaries.

After some further remarks by C. F. DAVIS (Kentish Town) and S. SMITH (Colne) the report was adopted.

The CREDENTIALS COMMITTEE reported that there were present delegates from the following branches—Bow and Bromley (2), Brixton, Canning Town, Chelsea, Clerkenwell, Deptford, East Mary-



lebone, Finsbury Park, Hackney, Hoxton, Kentish Town (2), Kilburn, North Camberwell, Plaistow, South Islington, Stoke Newington, Stratford; Armley, Barry, Birmingham (Central), Birmingham (East), Blackburn (Central), Blackburn (St. Paul's), Blackburn (Witton), Burnley, Colne, Coventry (2), Edinburgh, Hanley, Ilkeston, Lincoln, Liverpool (Central), Low Bentham, Nelson, Newcastle-under-Lyme, Northampton (4), Oxford, Reading, Southampton (2), Truro, West Salford, and Wigan. Subsequently there appeared: Battersea (2), Edmonton, Walworth, Whitechapel, Aberdeen, and Bury. Some irregularities in the credentials of a few delegates were dealt with by the Conference.

The amendments to the Constitution of the S.D.F. were next taken.

L. WARING (Kilburn) asked that discussion should be allowed on the amendments dealing with the General Council.

A. HAYDAY (Canning Town) urged that the question as to whether or not they should have discussion on the amendments should be decided upon now.

The CHAIRMAN said that that if a resolution were proposed that discussion should take place on any particular amendment he should not refuse to put it to the Conference, but so far as he had any power he should not allow any discussion to take place.

Comrades Draper and Westley were appointed tellers.

When the amendments to Rules 14 and 15 were reached, L. WARING (Kilburn) moved that a discussion take place.

The CHAIRMAN ruled that the Standing Orders must be suspended before a discussion could be allowed.

DAN IRVING (Burnley) moved, and L. WARING (Kilburn) seconded, that the Standing Orders be suspended. The suspension was rejected by 33 votes to 5.

The amendments to the Rules were dealt with previous to the adjournment at midday, the large majority of the proposed alterations having been rejected.

On assembling, the following report of the Parliamentary Committee was given in by T. Hewitt:—

The past year, as far as the Parliamentary Committee is concerned, has been a very uneventful one. There have been no elections in which to employ its energies, and it has therefore devoted itself to the very necessary work of financial organisation.

In the early part of the year the Committee were asked to recommend a candidate for the South Hackney Division, with a view to contesting the seat at the next election. The application was considered at several meetings of the Committee, and it was eventually decided to adjourn the further consideration of the matter.

In the expectation that a vacancy would shortly arise in the Blackburn Division, a Joint Election Council, composed of delegates

from the local I.L.P. and S.D.F. branches, was formed, and J. Burgess, of the I.L.P., was selected as candidate. This selection was approved by the Executive Council, and endorsed by the Parliamentary Committee. Owing to the vacancy not having arisen, as expected, Burgess has since tendered his resignation to the Council, and the Parliamentary Committee have been notified accordingly.

The whole question of the Metropolitan constituencies, in which candidates should be put forward, has been considered, and it was finally decided to contest the following seats when vacancies occurred: Hammersmith, Hoxton, South Hackney, West Islington, Kennington, Mile End, North St. Pancras, Bow and Bromley, Haggerston, Deptford, and North-West Ham.

The Provincial constituencies, which will also be contested by the S.D.F., are those selected at the Birmingham Conference in 1895, as follows: Reading, Northampton, Burnley, South Salford, West Salford, Southampton, Aberdeen, Hanley, Bury, Darwen, Wigan, Blackburn, Chorley, Rochdale, Clitheroe, Lincoln, Warrington, South-West Manchester, Central Leeds, Attercliffe, East Nottingham, and Coventry.

The Committee found, at the outset of their deliberations, that the branches had grossly neglected to pay their dues to the Parliamentary Fund. Very few branches have cleared their arrears, and many branches have failed to send in their Return Sheets. During the twelve months, ending June 30, 1897, the total Parliamentary dues paid by the whole of the branches amounted only to £60 16s. 11d.

The Committee are making strenuous endeavours to secure payment of arrears, and appeal to the delegates at this Conference to second their efforts by impressing upon their branches the urgent necessity of at once meeting their liabilities to the Parliamentary Fund in order that the Committee may be prepared to meet any electoral emergency.

In order to relieve our overworked Secretary of some of his many duties, the Committee have appointed comrade Hewitt as their Honorary Secretary.

At the last meeting of the Committee it was decided to lay the following resolution before the Conference: "That the Parliamentary Committee recommend the Annual Conference to make such alterations in the Rules as will make the Parliamentary Committee autonomous, instead of as at present being subject to the revision of the Executive Council."

In conclusion, the Committee wish to place on record their deep sense of the loss which they, and the organisation in general, have sustained by the death of comrade J. W. Sinclair, who at all times proved himself an able and zealous Social-Democrat and a loyal and active member of this organisation. The vacancy caused by his death, has been filled by the appointment of Mrs. Bloch as a member of the Committee.



The attendances during the past year were as follows—eight meetings being held: Hewitt, 8; Waring, 7; Geard, 6; Metivier, 5; H. Jones, 5; Lansbury, 4; Sinclair (deceased), 4; Mrs. Bloch (appointed in May last), 2.—T. HEWITT, Hon. Sec.

T. HEWITT gave instances of how branch secretaries appeared to misunderstand Rule 27. Some of the branches considered that the contributions to the Central Election Fund were not compulsory, whereas, of course, they were. As there was a space on the card of membership for contributions to the Central Election Fund, it stood to reason that branch secretaries should collect the amounts from their members.

L. WARING (Kilburn) seconded the adoption of the Parliamentary Committee's Report.

The discussion on the payments to the Central Election Fund was continued by G. S. HORSFALL (Nelson), J. E. FRISBY, H. C. GEDGE (Battersea), F. DAVEY (Bow and Bromley), and many other delegates.

G. LANSBURY did not think the pessimistic tone of the Parliamentary Committee's Report warranted. They had to consider that many branches had local election funds of their own.

H. QUELCH (Executive Council) spoke against the giving of autonomous powers to the Parliamentary Committee, which would mean setting up another Executive Council with co-equal powers.

E. AVELING (Whitechapel) moved, and W. J. BARWICK (Hanley) seconded, the deletion of that portion of the Committee's report calling for autonomous powers. The deletion was ultimately carried by 48 votes to 1, and the report was then adopted unanimously.

The nominations for the Executive Council were made and voted upon as follows:—C. F. Davis, 38; F. Willis, 10; G. Lansbury, 47; A. C. Condon, 6; Albert Ward, 1; F. G. Jones, 44; H. Quelch, 46; Martin Judge, 19; C. Martin, 17; Mrs. Despard, 19; H. M. Hyndman, 48; W. J. Barwick, 41; Mary Gray, 23; A. W. Macpherson, 14; A. P. Hazell, 38; E. Aveling, 50; J. Kent, 35; A. G. Wolfe, 19. A second vote:—M. Judge, 39; A. G. Wolfe, 26; Mrs. Despard (whose consent for nomination had not been asked), 13. The London portion of the Executive Council elected was, therefore:—E. Aveling, W. J. Barwick, C. F. Davis, Mary Gray, A. P. Hazell, H. M. Hyndman, F. G. Jones, M. Judge, J. Kent, G. Lansbury, H. Quelch, and A. G. Wolfe. Nominations for provincial portion:—G. W. Bartlett (High Wycombe), 23; J. Bland (Northampton), 24; F. Goodwin (Grays), 21; T. Louch (Lincoln), 22; F. S. Barnes (Reading), 34; T. Lewis (Southampton), 29; C. R. Vincent (Truro), 21; C. J. Scott (Northampton), 27; W. Small (Hamilton), 15; G. H. Wilson (Reading), 11; J. Spargo (Barry), 21; T. Hey (Aberdeen), 17; A. Porter (Coventry), 17; Dan Irving (Burnley), 34; J. Goodman (Liverpool), 16; J. Leslie (Edinburgh), 24; T. Hurley (Blackburn), 23. The provincial portion of the Executive

Council is:—F. S. Barnes, G. W. Bartlett, J. Bland, F. Goodwin, Tom Hurley, Dan Irving, J. Leslie, T. Lewis, T. Louch, C. J. Scott, J. Spargo, and C. R. Vincent.

The propaganda in South Wales was introduced by J. SPARGO (Barry). They did not know, at the time they placed the matter on the agenda paper of the Annual Conference, that it was already engaging the attention of the Organisation Committee. They now had comrade Chatterton spending a fortnight with them, and they were content to let the matter remain in the hands of the Organisation Committee. The movement was progressing in South Wales a great deal more rapidly than it even appeared to do. He gave some interesting details of the work carried on by the S.D.F. in Barry, Aberdare, Pontypridd, and spoke of the necessity of obtaining speakers who could lecture to the people in the vernacular.

J. JONES (Wigan) moved: "That this Conference appoint a committee to deal with a scheme for victimised members." He said that in Wigan, as soon as a comrade made himself prominent in the movement he got discharged. That meant that, so far as Wigan was concerned, they could have no propagandists. He thought the London comrades did not sufficiently understand the difficulties they had to face in small towns. The fear of the boycott was creating a dearth of speakers.

G. S. HORSFALL (Nelson) seconded. The same thing had happened at Nelson, where men had been driven out of the town for being prominent in the Socialist movement, so that it was absolutely impossible for many of them to take any active part in local work. They could not get young speakers to come forward with the fear of unemployment before them. He thought it would be futile to start any co-operative scheme, but branches might send up various suggestions to the committee.

W. J. BARWICK (Hanley) moved a committee of six. This was included in the original resolution.

G. LANSBURY suggested that the committee be appointed from Lancashire.

H. QUELCH (Executive Council) was in hopes that there would have been some suggestions made to the Conference as to the best means of dealing with the question of victimised members. If the organisation of local supply stores was of no use, he did not see what was to be done. The loyalty of members was wanted to keep them going.

A. HAYDAY (Canning Town) said it was a mistake to suppose that London members were not victimised equally with the country members. He did not think that the Executive or any other committee could draft a scheme which would benefit victimised members generally. He was against trying to form co-operative societies.

After some remarks from F. CRITCHLEY (Reading), R. KENDAL (Hoxton) and J. SPARGO (Barry) moved and seconded that next



business be taken. This was rejected by 26 to 14. On the motion being put, it was carried by 25 votes to 9.

W. BREWER (Low Bentham) moved that the Committee be formed from Lancashire and Yorkshire members. This was seconded.

W. KIRKTON (Northampton) moved and H. NEUMANN (Chelsea) seconded that the Committee be formed from the Executive. This was rejected by 25 votes to 3. The original motion was finally carried by 30 votes to 1, and the matter was deputed to the Lancashire District Council.

The Conference then closed for the day.

On Monday, August 2, the chair was occupied, during a portion of the proceedings, by the deputy chairman, C. J. Scott.

The proceedings began with the discussion on the relationship of the S.D.F. to trade unionism. E. AVELING (Whitechapel) said they had two resolutions dealing with the same question, one from the Burnley Branch and one from the Executive Council. The Burnley Branch were agreeable to withdrawing their resolution if that from the Executive Council could be taken as follows:—

“This Conference counsels all members of the S.D.F., as far as possible, to become members of their respective trade unions, and to work harmoniously with trade unionists and co-operators as representing organisations having for their object the improvement of the status of the workers, whilst nevertheless insisting upon the fact that in the socialisation of the means of production, distribution and exchange, lies the only hope of permanently bettering the condition of the wage-earners, and therefore claims the political support of all trade unionists and co-operators as a means towards this end.” It was decided, with one dissentient, to take the resolution in that form.

E. AVELING said it was quite time and absolutely necessary that they should have some authoritative declaration in respect to the S.D.F. on the one hand and trade unionism on the other. Everyone knew that, in the provinces especially, opinion was divided upon it. The use they had to make of trade unions was to get inside them—“permeate” them, if he might be allowed to use the word—and turn their aims and funds to socialistic ends; and the permeation of them was entirely different to the permeation of the Liberal party; for whilst the Liberal party was entirely opposed to Socialism, the ideas of trade unionism, as far as they went, were socialistic. Much the same could be said of co-operation. Their co-operator friends did not understand them, and it was necessary that Socialists should make them understand them, and use their organisation in the same way they wanted to use the trade union organisation. In dealing with trade unionism and co-operation it was above all absolutely necessary to keep well to the front the fact that the ultimate aim of Socialism was the socialisation of the instruments of production, distribution and exchange.

DAN IRVING (Burnley) seconded. He was thoroughly in agreement with what Dr. Aveling had said. The reason they had taken up the question was because, there being no declaration of policy towards trade unionism on the part of the S.D.F., the utterances of certain speakers with reference to trade unions retarded our growth among those bodies. They did not wish to capture the trade unions in any offensive sense, but to capture the intelligence of their members, so as to cause them to see the limitations of their own movement.

H. QUELCH (Executive Council) said the Executive proposed their resolution because they felt that, while it was necessary to define our position towards the trade unionists, the resolution of the Burnley Branch attached too much importance to the trade union movement. It was one thing to exaggerate the importance of trade unionism; it was another thing altogether to say we must fight trade unionism. In fact, there was no trade union movement in the strict sense of the term. For the most part they were friendly societies for mutual self-help. As political societies they had practically no existence. He spoke of the attitude of certain trade unionist leaders towards Tom Mann at Halifax and Keir Hardie at East Bradford. Even the resolutions of the Trade Union Congress itself are considered to be the pious opinions of the men gathered together, and are reckoned as having no binding effect on their own members. But they wanted the trade unionists because they were the best among the working classes; and there was no more reason to attack trade unionism than any other institution which did not interfere with their Socialist work.

A. HAYDAY (Canning Town) spoke in support of the resolution, and hoped the Conference would be unanimous upon it.

L. WARING (Kilburn) desired to move an amendment, but the suspension of the Standing Orders was rejected by 15 votes to 7.

W. KIRKTON (Northampton) supported the resolution, and spoke of their relations to the trade unionists of Northampton.

H. NEUMANN (Chelsea) opposed the resolution. It was all very well to invite the friendliness of trade unions, but they could not support trade unionists or co-operators unless they were Social-Democrats. He disagreed entirely from comrade Aveling as regards co-operators. Co-operative societies were controlled by men who were small capitalists. Were they after years of uncompromising policy to go in for compromise? They had been able to carry on their work in the past, and there was no necessity to change their policy. They were reminded that the continental Social-Democrats worked hand-in-hand with the trade unionists. But the position was altogether different in this country. Abroad the trade unions had sprung from the Social-Democrats; here the trade unionists were reactionary.

F. WILLIS (Kentish Town) said the position of Social-Democrats to trade unionists was generally misunderstood. Because the



Social-Democrat pointed out that trade unionism had its limits, it was believed that he was opposed to trade unions. He did not agree, however, with Social-Democrats working with trade unionists in the matter of candidatures. If they did they might at times be called upon to support a trade unionist candidate who was opposed to Socialism. But the trade unions were an excellent field for the propaganda of Social-Democracy, and he contended the S.D.F. had made much greater progress among the trade unionists than among any other section of the working class.

G. S. HORSFALL (Nelson) said the question was, could they, as Social-Democrats, do more by sticking to the trade unions and working inside them, or could they do more towards making the workers class-conscious by withdrawing from them? He thought, by withdrawing, they would lose a good field for propaganda; and the effect of their propaganda inside the unions was shown by the increasing number of Socialist delegates sent to trade congresses.

MARTIN JUDGE (Battersea) questioned if the object of trade unionism was to improve the position of the workers as a class, and he instanced the attitude of the skilled trades towards unskilled labour. Many of the strikes, he contended, arose out of disputes between trade societies themselves.

A. BROOKS (Blackburn), after having three years' experience with trade unionists on the Blackburn Guardians, believed them to be thoroughly reactionary. How could they support those gentlemen who were backing up the half-time system? He urged that they should leave the ship of trade unionism.

W. J. BARWICK (Hanley) said he had been as active as anyone in pointing out where trade unionism failed. But because some of the trade unionists were reactionary was no reason why they should leave the ship. They should remain to steer it.

J. SPARGO (Barry) thought they required light rather than heat on the subject, and spoke in support of the resolution.

The following telegram from the Bristol Socialist Society was read and loudly applauded: "The Bristol Socialist Society send hearty congratulations on past achievements and best wishes for future of Social-Democracy."

It was decided, with three dissentients, that the question be put, and the resolution on trade unionism was carried by 46 votes to 2.

The relationship of the S.D.F. to the I.L.P. was introduced in the following resolution, brought forward by H. QUELCH (Executive Council) on behalf of the Executive Council: "That a Court of Appeal, composed of three representatives of the S.D.F., and an equal number representing the I.L.P., shall be formed, and that where the two organisations are seeking to put forward candidates in opposition to each other for election to Parliament or any local elective body, and where no agreement can be come to locally, the dispute shall be referred to this Court of Appeal for decision, such decision to be binding upon both parties, and in the event of a

deadlock arising in the Court of Appeal, the matter in dispute shall be referred to an arbitrator mutually agreed upon by the parties represented, whose decision shall be final and binding." H. QUELCH said that since the formation of the I.L.P. there had been a gradual narrowing of the dividing line between the two bodies. At its last Conference the I.L.P. had declared in favour of the full Social-Democratic programme, and had thus lost the reason of its existence as a separate body, which was that there was a large number of people outside the S.D.F. who would not join the body because of its ultra-Socialist principles, but were discontented with the ordinary political candidates. But the position had changed. In many parts of the country joint committees for local electoral purposes had been formed by branches of the two bodies. Therefore it was felt that the time had come when there should be a definite agreement as to dealing with any electoral disputes which might arise. Then it was necessary to mention the informal meeting which had recently been held by certain members of the I.L.P. and S.D.F. It had been falsely represented by various people that there were certain individuals in the S.D.F. antagonistic to any kind of arrangement between the two bodies, and if only they could be got rid of there would be no difficulty in forming one Socialist party. This had been urged so persistently that at the invitation of a mutual friend it was agreed that a few from each side should meet informally. He assured them that no one went there as a delegate or in any representative capacity. A statement was drawn up and certain recommendations were made which would be put before the Executives of the two bodies. On the question of the name of the body, should amalgamation take place, there was a difference of opinion. The members of the S.D.F. present regarded it as an essential that the title, Social-Democratic, should be retained in some form, and proposed "The Independent Social-Democratic Labour Party" as compounding the titles of both bodies. The members of the I.L.P. were willing to give up everything, and wanted the name to be the "Socialist Party." But the word "Socialist" was not definite. According to Earl Wemyss, the title would include Lord Salisbury! But out of the meeting no harm could possibly come, and it showed that the members of the S.D.F. were prepared to make friends with those who were prepared to make friends with them.

The adoption of the resolution was moved by L. WARING (Kilburn) and seconded by MARTIN JUDGE (Battersea). The discussion was continued by C. F. DAVIS (Kentish Town), H. NEUMANN (Chelsea), and C. R. VINCENT (Truro).

H. M. HYNDMAN said that the proposal was for the object of making, really, at elections, one party instead of two. He hoped the resolution would be carried unanimously. He thought all could agree that they should not run antagonistic candidates. With regard to the suggested amalgamation, the S.D.F., he felt, would be



willing to give way on all things except essentials. He regretted that there had appeared in *Reynolds* an account of what had taken place at the informal meeting, especially as it had been decided that nothing of the kind should appear. He could assure them that the account did not emanate from them. If the amalgamation came about, he thought they would form a large and solid Social-Democratic Party in this country.

Ultimately the resolution was carried by 51 votes to 2.

A letter was read from Salford with respect to the holding of the resignation form of an S.D.F. candidate adopted by a joint committee. The following was adopted by 33 votes to 4, to be submitted to the branches for confirmation: "In the event of a member of the S.D.F. being adopted as a candidate for any local election by two or more bodies, the resignation be placed in the hands of the Secretary of the Joint Committee, to be used only on the authority of a two-thirds majority of all the bodies."

E. AVELING (Whitechapel) moved: "That the Annual Conference decide at once to organise an agitation in favour of the Abolition of Child Labour and the institution of Free Maintenance for School Children."

W. KIRKTON (Northampton) seconded.

The discussion was continued by J. JONES (Wigan), G. S. HORSFALL (Nelson), and DAN IRVING. On being put, the resolution was carried unanimously.

The following resolution was spoken to by H. QUELCH on behalf of the Executive Council: "That the only payments to be made to lecturers for the S.D.F. shall be out-of-pocket expenses, which shall include wages for time unavoidably lost; that this Conference discourages in the strongest possible way anything like a custom of payment for lecturing as a business, and recommends that all paid lecturers for the party be engaged through the Central Office." He argued that the best work for the movement was that which was done voluntarily, and the resolution would discourage people lecturing for payment on their "own." It would not interfere with the engagement of local organisers; and where a man was called upon to devote his whole time to the organisation he should be paid, and be under the control of the S.D.F.

J. JONES (Wigan) and W. J. BARWICK (Hanley) moved and seconded the adoption of the resolution.

The discussion was continued by A. HAYDAY (Canning Town), H. NEUMANN (Chelsea), G. S. HORSFALL (Nelson), — GLEESON (East Birmingham), R. ALLAN (Edinburgh), H. M. HYNDMAN, T. HEWITT (Finsbury Park), C. F. DAVIS (Kentish Town), and J. SPARGO (Barry). The resolution was finally put and carried unanimously.

L. WARING (Kilburn) moved, and DAN IRVING (Burnley) seconded, that a committee be appointed to consider the best means of making the General Council a more useful body. This was finally

carried by 35 votes to 3. E. Aveling, F. G. Jones, H. Neumann, H. Quelch, and L. Waring were appointed the committee.

The following towns were proposed for the holding of the Annual Conference of 1898:—Blackburn, 1; Edinburgh, 28; Lincoln, 10; London, 3; Oxford, 2; and Reading, 2. Edinburgh is therefore the place where the next Annual Conference will be held.

H. M. HYNDMAN then asked permission to move the following resolution:—"That the Seventeenth Annual Conference of the S.D.F. demands that all persons accused of sedition in India should be given a fair and open trial, protests against the despotic treatment of leading citizens of Bombay, and expresses its entire sympathy with the people of India in any efforts they may make to put an end to our present shameful and ruinous rule." He said that the Social-Democratic Federation was the only organisation in England that had a word to say on behalf of India. There was there the most terrific famine ever known in its history, and admitted to be so by Lord George Hamilton, the most ridiculous and lying optimist that ever held office in connection with the government of India in England. In addition, there was the terrible plague, which recalled in its extent the plagues of the Middle Ages, as well as the cholera and the tremendous earthquake. Besides, there was a great deal of discontent through the great offices of the country being filled almost entirely with Englishmen and foreigners; and there was the great drain of produce from India, for the benefit of the upper and middle classes in England, of over £20,000,000 a year, which had practically occasioned the famine. Native prejudices were outraged in the name of sanitation, and until a proper inquiry were held into the administration of the sanitary business at Poona he must firmly believe that the women there were improperly treated by the soldiers of our army. Two of the most prominent citizens of Poona had been deported to distant places without the slightest trial of any kind. This was most abominable despotism, whether exercised by Englishmen or Russians or Spaniards, or anyone else. Unless the government of India were completely changed, it should be known that they sympathised with rebellion in India or any effort the people of India might make to relieve themselves from the infamous rule occasioning the famine and bringing about the discontent.

The resolution was seconded by H. QUELCH and carried unanimously with great acclamation.

H. QUELCH and W. J. BARWICK expressed the thanks of the delegates to the Northampton members for the admirable manner in which they had attended to the details of the Conference and the comfort of the delegates; and the Conference closed with the singing of the "Marseillaise" and cheers for the Social Revolution.



# PROGRAMME AND RULES

## OF THE

# SOCIAL-DEMOCRATIC FEDERATION.

*(As revised at the Annual Conference held at Northampton,  
August 1st and 2nd, 1897.)*

### OBJECT.

THE Socialisation of the Means of Production, Distribution, and Exchange, to be controlled by a Democratic State in the interests of the entire community, and the complete Emancipation of Labour from the Domination of Capitalism and Landlordism, with the establishment of Social and Economic Equality between the Sexes.

### PROGRAMME.

I.—All organisers or Administrators to be elected by Equal Direct Adult Suffrage, and to be maintained by the Community.

II.—Legislation by the People in such wise that no project of Law shall become binding till accepted by the majority of the People.

III.—The abolition of Standing Armies, and the establishment of National Citizen Forces; the People to decide on Peace or War.

IV.—All Education to be Compulsory, Secular, Industrial, and Free.

V.—The Administration of Justice to be Free to all.

VI.—The Means of Production, Distribution, and Exchange to be declared and treated as Collective or Common Property.

VII.—The Production and Distribution of Wealth to be regulated by the Community in the common interests of all its Members.

VIII.—The establishment of International Courts of Arbitration.

### PALLIATIVES.

As measures called for to palliate the evils of our existing society the Social-Democratic Federation urges for immediate adoption:—

The Compulsory Construction by Public Bodies of Healthy Dwellings for the People, such dwellings to be let at rents to cover the cost of construction and maintenance alone.

Free, Secular, and Technical education, compulsory upon all classes, together with Free Maintenance for the children in all State Schools.

No child to be employed in any trade or occupation until 16 years of age, and heavy penalties to be inflicted on employers infringing this law.

Eight Hours or less to be the Normal Working Day, or not more than Forty-Four Hours per Week, to be fixed in all trades and

industries by Legislative Enactment. Imprisonment to be inflicted on employers for any infringement of this law.

Cumulative Taxation upon all incomes exceeding £300 a year.

State Appropriation of Railways and Canals; Municipal Ownership and Control of Gas, Electric Light, and Water Supplies; the organisation of Tramway and Omnibus Services and similar monopolies in the interests of the entire community.

The extension of the Post Office Banks so that they shall absorb all private institutions that derive a profit from operations in money or credit.

Repudiation of the National Debt.

Nationalisation of the Land, and Organisation of Agricultural and Industrial Armies under State or Municipal control on co-operative principles.

The Disestablishment and Disendowment of all State Churches. The Establishment of Adequate Pensions for the Aged and Infirm Workers. Every person attaining the age of fifty to be kept by the Community, work being optional after that age. The Establishment of Municipal Hospitals and Dispensaries. Municipal control of the Food and Coal Supply. Abolition of the Present Workhouse System, and the Provision of Useful Work for the Unemployed. State Control of the Lifeboat Service.

As means for the peaceable attainment of these objects the Social-Democratic Federation advocates:—

Payment of Members of Parliament and of all local bodies. Payment of Official Expenses of Elections out of the Public Funds. Adult Suffrage. Annual Parliaments. Proportional Representation. Second Ballot. Initiative and Referendum. Canvassing to be made Illegal. Abolition of the Monarchy and the House of Lords. Extension of the Powers of County, Town, District and Parish Councils. Legislative Independence for all Parts of the Empire.

### RULES.

1. Any person who accepts in writing, on the form provided for that purpose, the Programme, Rules, and General Policy of the Social-Democratic Federation, may become, subject to approval, a member of a branch of the organisation. No member shall be allowed to belong to more than one branch.

2. The minimum subscription of a member shall be one penny a week to the branch; each branch shall contribute not less than one quarter of such subscription to the Propaganda Fund, to be paid monthly. Any member more than 13 weeks in arrears shall be struck off the roll of membership, unless a satisfactory explanation be given. The subscriptions of members on strike or out of employment or during sickness may be reduced or suspended. Branches must be notified in all cases before subscriptions can be either reduced or suspended.

3. If a number of persons, not less than six, apply to the General



Council for leave to open a branch of the Federation, the Council shall at once enquire into the circumstances, and, if satisfied, authorise the formation of such branch.

4. In opening new branches of the S.D.F. the branch so doing shall be called upon by the General or Executive Council, when application for permission to form a branch is made, to place a trustworthy comrade in position as secretary of the new branch for six months, or for a shorter period, if he or she should find one of the members of the new branch capable of filling that post.

5. Branches shall elect their own officers, and draw up such rules as they deem proper for their own management, provided that they are in accord with the principles of the Federation. Branches shall report progress to the General Council at least once a quarter.

6. Where several branches exist in the same town or district they may form themselves into Local Central Committees, consisting of delegates from the various branches, for local business, such delegates to be elected proportionally, the proportion to be decided by the local branches.

7. There shall be an Annual Conference of the members of the Federation. The Annual Conference shall appoint time and place of the next Annual Conference, which in every year shall be held within at least thirteen months of the preceding Conference.

8. Every branch shall be entitled to send to the Annual Conference one delegate, and every branch numbering over 50 members may send two delegates, and for every additional 50 members one additional delegate to the number of 200 members. Above that number one additional delegate to every 100 paying members. The expenses of the delegates shall be defrayed by the branch that sends them. Only delegates shall be entitled to vote, and no discussion shall be allowed on any matter upon which the branches have had an opportunity of instructing their delegates. Branches outside the town where the Conference is held, which are entitled to send more than one delegate, may, if they be unable to pay the expenses of the full number of delegates to which they are entitled, record their full number of votes through their one delegate. No member shall be eligible as delegate who has not been a member of the S.D.F. for at least twelve months.

9. The Annual Conference shall decide the general policy for the ensuing year, and make rules and regulations for carrying out the objects of the S.D.F. All resolutions affecting the management of the organisation, which have been round to the branches and passed by the General Council, shall be placed on the agenda for the succeeding Conference, to be re-affirmed or rejected, and, if re-affirmed, to be embodied in the rules.

10. Notice must be given in *Justice* of the date and place of each Conference at least two months before such Conference.

11. Branches which have not been in existence more than six

months before the date of the Conference cannot vote by their delegates without permission of the majority of the other delegates.

12. Notice of intended amendments to the Programme, Rules, and General Policy must be sent to the General Council at least two months before the Annual Conference, such amendments to be sent round to the branches. If thought necessary, the branches may then send amendments to those at first sent round at least one month previous to the Conference. The first list of amendments, together with the amendments thereto, shall then be sent to the branches at least fourteen days before the Annual Conference.

13. It shall be for the General Council to summon as many Extraordinary Conferences in the course of the year as they deem fit.

14. The General Council shall constitute the central body, and shall be composed exclusively of delegates appointed by the branches of the Federation. No one shall be eligible as delegate who has not been a member for at least six months; and no one can act as delegate for more than one branch. Every branch shall be entitled to send to the General Council one delegate, and every branch that has been in existence six months and numbers over 100 members may send two delegates, and for every additional 500 members one additional delegate. A branch shall have power to recall its delegate at any time by appointing another delegate. A branch may elect any member as its delegate, whether such comrade be a member of that branch or not, but not more than three members of one branch may sit for other branches. The delegates shall vote as empowered by the branches on all questions specified by the Agenda Paper, and those unable to attend shall forward their instructions, their votes to be recorded as if present. Questions not on the Agenda Paper may be discussed and voted upon if urgency be voted by a three-fourths majority, but shall be sent round to the branches for confirmation or rejection. The Secretary shall, as soon as possible after each meeting of the General Council, draw up and send round to all the branches a statement of the resolutions passed at such meeting, and an Agenda Paper of the business of the following meeting. The General Council shall meet once every three months, each meeting to be held in a different town to, to be decided upon by, the previous meeting; but the Executive Council, or a tenth of the total branches of the organisation, shall have the power to call a special meeting of the General Council. Branches not financially able to send delegates to the quarterly Council meetings shall be allowed to have their votes recorded if sent by a properly accredited letter. The meetings shall commence at 8 p.m., and no new business shall be taken after 10 p.m., unless leave be given by a majority of those present. Fifteen members present shall form a quorum. The chairman shall be elected by a majority of those present. The officers of the General Council shall be appointed by the General Council, and shall consist of the following—viz., General Secretary, Assistant



Secretary, Political Secretary, Treasurer, Auditors, and Lecture Secretary.

15. There shall be an Executive Council nominated only by the branches, and elected by the Annual Conference, which shall be held responsible to and report to each meeting of the General Council. This Executive shall be composed of twelve members, seven of whom shall form a quorum, in addition to which there shall be twelve provincial members of the Executive who shall have the right to attend and vote on the Executive when in London. No member shall be elected on the Executive Council who has been a member of the S.D.F. for less than twelve months. The Executive Council shall in no way go against the constitution and general policy of the S.D.F. as laid down by the Annual Conference. The Executive Council shall attend to the carrying out of all resolutions and decisions passed by the General Council. The Secretary of the General Council also shall be Secretary of the Executive Council. Notices of all meetings of the Executive Council shall be given in *Justice*.

16. FINANCE.—All dues, donations, and subscriptions shall be receivable by the Secretary, who shall be empowered to give receipts for the same, and to authorise the acknowledgment thereof in *Justice* or elsewhere. No payments shall be made except by direction of the General or Executive Council, save in cases of emergency, when payments may be made by the Treasurer on his obtaining the sanction of at least two members of the Finance Committee, such payment not to exceed £5.

17. COMMITTEES.—The Executive Council shall appoint and define the duties and powers of the following Committees:—Finance, Literary, Parliamentary, and International. All committees shall present a report of their work during their term of office to the Annual Conference. Members of these committees need not be members of the Executive Council, but no member of the Social-Democratic Federation shall be on more than two of these committees.

18. DUTIES OF OFFICERS.—The Secretary shall conduct all correspondence as directed by the General and Executive Councils, keep minutes of all proceedings of the General and Executive Councils, and of general meetings of the Federation, and submit to the Executive Council all letters received and copies of all letters written by him. The Treasurer shall keep the accounts of the Federation, and a balance-sheet shall be submitted to the General Council and sent to all branches once a quarter.

19. No branch shall be allowed to keep the collection made at any open-air meeting at which the lecturer has been supplied by the Lecture Secretary, but should, if in difficulties, apply to the General Council for a grant.

20. In case of any dispute between any branch and the General Council, a Committee of Examination shall be formed consisting of

nine members of the Federation appointed by the General Council, to examine into and report to the General Council on such dispute. Should it then be deemed necessary, the General Council shall thereupon appoint a member of the Federation, not a member of the Council, as its arbitrator, and the branch shall appoint another member of the Federation as its arbitrator, and these two shall have the power to hear such dispute and to appoint an umpire, who must also be a member of the Federation, whose decision shall be final and binding.

21. A Board of Examination shall be formed, which shall meet as determined by the Executive Council, whose duties shall be to examine and question candidates for the central lecture list on the principles of Social-Democracy.

22. No member of the S.D.F. shall be placed on the central lecture list who has not undergone this examination. No member shall be permitted to accept fees for lecturing other than those recognised by or received through the Central or Executive authority.

23. All members of the S.D.F., before being run as parliamentary candidates, shall be required to pass an examination in Socialist economics.

24. The General Council has power to dissolve any branch or expel any member of the Federation, provided that not less than two-thirds of the General Council, acting on instructions from the branches they represent, deem the action of such branch or member to be opposed to the interests and principles of the Federation.

25. Before a member of the S.D.F. is nominated for election to any legislative or administrative body, he or she shall sign a declaration of willingness to remain under the guidance of his or her branch, and to withdraw from such body should not less than two-thirds of the branch decide upon it at a special meeting called for that purpose, of which not less than 21 days' notice shall be given both to the member concerned and members of the branch. Where more than one branch is concerned, not less than two-thirds of the members of the branches concerned. Before being nominated, every member must place in the hands of the General Secretary a letter resigning any public position to which he or she might be elected, such letter of resignation to be undated, and to be addressed to the Chairman or other official of the public body for which the member is nominated. Such resignation shall not be enforced until 21 days after the special branch meeting has been held, in order to give the member whose conduct is impugned time to appeal to the General Council.

26. The Council or branches may vote donations or make levies in aid of objects deemed helpful to the cause of labour.

27. Each member shall pay one penny per month to the Parliamentary Election Fund.

28. Each branch shall be levied at least 2s. 6d. per year to be



paid to the Central Premises Fund for defraying the expenses of the Central Hall.

29. Each branch shall pay to Political Secretary's Wages Fund the sum of 3d. per week for every twenty-five or part of twenty-five members.

30. The names of all the members of the Executive Council shall be signed to every official document passed by the Executive Council, not necessarily for publication.

31. All regulations shall remain in force until amended or rescinded at an Annual or Extraordinary Conference.

32. Anything not provided for in the present rules shall be supplied by special regulations from the General Council, subject to the revision of the Annual Conference.

#### GENERAL POLICY.

1. No member shall take any public action in municipal or other local elections without obtaining the consent of the branch to which such member belongs.

2. No member shall take any public parliamentary political action without obtaining the consent of the General Council.

3. No member or branch shall publicly support any candidate at any political election unless they first obtain the consent of the Executive Council.

4. No member shall stand as a candidate for any Vestry, Guardians, School Board, Municipal, or other local elections of a political or semi-political character, unless such member does so as a definitely avowed Social-Democrat with the consent of the branch to which such member belongs.

5. No member shall stand as a candidate for any Parliamentary election unless such member does so as a definitely avowed Social-Democratic candidate, with the consent of the Executive Council.

6. No branch shall run any person as a candidate for any election who has not been a financial member for at least twelve months.\*

7. Should any member be returned at any of the above-mentioned elections for which such member shall stand as a definitely avowed Social-Democratic candidate, such member will be held subject to the branch to which he or she belongs for general guidance with regard to local action, and to the General and Executive Councils for general guidance with regard to parliamentary action. Candidates for all elections shall be compelled to sign a resignation form.

8. The General Council are empowered under Rule 24 to suspend or expel by a two-thirds majority any member or branch of the S.D.F. wilfully infringing any of the above regulations.

All communications for the Social-Democratic Federation should be addressed to the Secretary, 337, Strand, London, W.C.

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N.B.—\* This clause in its present form was passed on the understanding that, in the case of a recognised Socialist body joining the S.D.F., the General or Executive Council is empowered to suspend the rule.